

field in their favor. In states that have approved new congressional maps, there are now 15 fewer competitive districts than there were before. Fewer competitive districts increases partisanship, since candidates who only have to appeal to primary voters have no incentive to compromise or move to the center.

Finally and perhaps most perniciously, we've seen state legislatures try to assert power over core election processes including the ability to certify election results. These partisan attempts at voter nullification are unlike anything we've seen in modern times, and they represent a profound threat to the basic democratic principle that all votes should be counted fairly and objectively.

The good news is that the majority of American voters are resistant to this slow unraveling of basic democratic institutions and electoral mechanisms. But their elected representatives have a sacred obligation to push back as well—and now is the time to do it.

Now, there are bills in front of the Senate that would protect the right to vote, end partisan gerrymandering, and restore crucial parts of the Voting Rights Act. Bill sponsors have diligently reached out to their Republican colleagues to obtain their support. Sadly, almost every Senate Republican who expressed concern about threats to our democracy in the immediate aftermath of the Jan. 6 insurrection has since been cowed into silence or reversed their positions. When one of the bills in front of the Senate today was introduced in November, every Democrat supported it. And every Republican but one voted against moving it forward.

Protecting our democracy wasn't always a partisan issue. The Voting Rights Act was the result of Democratic and Republican efforts, and both President Reagan and President George W. Bush signed its renewal when they were in office. But even if Senate Republicans now refuse to stand up for our democracy, Democrats should be able to get the job done with a simple majority vote. There are already 50 Senators who support bills to safeguard elections. The only thing standing in the way is the filibuster—a Senate procedure that allows a minority of just 41 Senators to prevent legislation from being brought up for a vote.

The filibuster has no basis in the Constitution. Historically, the parliamentary tactic was used sparingly—most notably by Southern senators to block civil rights legislation and prop up Jim Crow. In recent years, the filibuster became a routine way for the Senate minority to block important progress on issues supported by the majority of voters. But we can't allow it to be used to block efforts to protect our democracy. That's why I fully support President Joe Biden's call to modify Senate rules as necessary to make sure pending voting rights legislation gets called for a vote. And every American who cares about the survival of our most cherished institutions should support the president's call as well.

PROTECTING OUR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

For generations, Americans of every political stripe have taken pride in our status as the world's oldest continuous democracy. We have spilled precious blood and spent countless treasure in defense of democracy and freedom abroad. But as we learned during the Jim Crow era, our role as democracy's defender isn't credible when we violate the rights and freedoms of our own citizens. And at a time when democracy is under attack on every continent, we can't hope to set an example for the world when one of our two major parties seems intent on chipping away at the foundation of our own democracy.

No single piece of legislation can guarantee that we'll make progress on every

challenge we face as a nation. But legislation that ensures the right to vote and makes sure every vote is properly counted will give us a better chance of meeting those challenges. It's how we can overcome the gridlock and cynicism that's so prevalent right now. It's how we can stop climate change, and reform our broken immigration system, and help ensure that our children enjoy an economy that works for everyone and not just the few.

Now is the time for all of us to follow John Lewis' example. Now is the time for the U.S. Senate to do the right thing. America's longstanding grand experiment in democracy is being sorely tested. Future generations are counting on us to meet that test.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, as we continue this important conversation about the future of our democracy, I ask my Democratic colleagues to consider the following: If the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy, then how can we in good conscience allow for a situation in which the Republican Party can debate and pass voter suppression laws at the State level with only a simple majority vote but not allow the United States to do the same?

Let me repeat that.

If the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy, then how can we in good conscience allow for a situation in which the Republican Party can debate and pass voter suppression laws at the State level with only a simple majority vote but not allow the U.S. Senate to do the same?

In the coming days, we will confront this sobering question.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, a recent survey asked Americans for their view of the most important problems facing our country. Of course, we know what Washington Democrats view as their top priority. President Biden and Senate Democrats have been shouting—actually shouting—at the American people that an evil, racist, anti-voting conspiracy will destroy democracy forever unless Democrats get total one-party control of the entire government, starting next week.

But are the American people buying any of it? Is this what working families want prioritized? So let's take a look. In a recent survey, Gallup asked citizens for their priorities, what they thought we ought to be doing.

Do you know what share of Americans said election law? Less than one-half of 1 percent—one-half of 1 percent. Nobody in this country is buying the fake hysteria that democracy will die unless Democrats get total control.

Here is what people do care about: The top response at 21 percent was poor government leadership. About a year into the Biden administration, the American people's single greatest concern is bad leadership. And when you dig into the other issues, you can see why.

Some of the next largest concerns were either general economic problems or inflation and rising costs, in particular, and no wonder—no wonder. New figures, just yesterday, show our country continues to experience the worst inflation in 40 years—40 years.

Gas prices are nearly a dollar higher than a year ago; grocery prices are up 6.5 percent; and across the economy, inflation has exceeded 5 percent every month for 7 straight months. There is no working family who has not been hurt directly by this.

Another huge chunk of Americans said their chief worry is the coronavirus—certainly no surprise there. A year into the administration that promised it would shut down the virus, well, what do we have? Record-setting new cases. Shortages of testing. Shortages of important treatments, in part, because of the Biden administration's decisions.

We have reports of multiple States potentially limiting or excluding patients from lifesaving treatments on the basis, believe it or not, of their ethnicity.

And still, 2 years into this, notwithstanding abundant vaccines and a milder variant, we have Big Labor bosses in big cities being permitted to lock vulnerable kids out of the classroom.

Oh, and when kids are in the classroom, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice try to persecute concerned parents who dare ask what their kids are learning.

So these are just a few examples of real problems. These are the kinds of places where the American people need this dramatically unpopular administration to entirely refocus.

Yesterday, a new poll indicated that 33 percent of Americans approve of the President—33 percent. When he was inaugurated and pledging to govern for all Americans, to heal and unite the country, this White House enjoyed impressive approval ratings. But as the far left has been handed the reins, the support has cratered.

Now, there is a path forward for my Democratic colleagues to respond to the country they have so badly disappointed, but it isn't to try to break the Senate and rewrite election laws. It is to actually start tracking the issues that American families need tackled.

Now, there are also countless other issues which may not make national headlines but matter hugely to those who are affected. For example, next